Mirrorgames: Notes and explanations

The text “Mirrorgames” you are about to read was written in the period 1989-1990 and was revised recently between November 2017 and January 2018. To be more specific the first draft was began in the 1989 summer term of my teacher training programme in Roehampton, added to in the ensuing summer holiday before I began my first teaching job, and was slightly revised the next year. I have made only minor changes to the original in this new digitalised format.

The original dedicatee, Peter Cavalier, is the only person to have read this text before now.

This piece of long writing was imagined as a partly fictionalised autobiography, describing my relationships with several important women in my life, who were 'sisters'. I am an only child, but my mother always wanted the 'boy and girl' children scenario and was only persuaded by her GP (as related in the text) to abandon attempts to have a second child because she had suffered from extreme toxaemia during her pregnancy, plus further complications led to me being born 4 weeks late under traumatic conditions, with a complicated forceps delivery. She was told by the GP it was (literally) a miracle we both survived, and that toxaemia could return as virulently during a second pregnancy.

The metaphor adopted as a running motif in the text is that of a smashed and shattered mirror as an analogy of this trauma, each 'shard' or 'splinter' showing a different relationship to a sister whom I attempt to replace this missing unborn person. This is explained in more detail in section 8 of 'Mirrorgames'. Only when I started reading Philip K Dick in 2005, did I realise he was suffering from a similar trauma (his twin sister died shortly after birth, and he felt guilty about it his whole life, having taken up all the available nourishment as it were). Many of his female characters seem to be portrayed in a similar way to the women in my book.

The text is aligned with volume 4 of my short writing series, the first part of which was written during the same time period, which is the next text I will be digitalising and that you could receive in February 2018. The poems to 'St Jude' and 'Sparrow' in this volume were the first versions of the ones described and analysed in 'Mirrorgames'.

The form of the text is in tension between a 200 page poem and a novel. Each paragraph is meant to be taken in a single breath and is ended with an ellipsis or a full stop (occasionally a question mark). In the original version these paragraphs were often longer: what I have done in this revision is taken out all colon and semi-colon punctuation and substituted these with a new paragraph but with a lower case letter to start; this is to make the text (probably) easier to read (and with shorter breath patterns). If the quotation marks are double (“. . .”), this means the contents were spoken by one of the characters; all single quotation marks are either excerpts from the analysed poems or words that need to be defined/explained. The point of view is usually second person, addressed to the

sister character.

The main characters are these:
1: Peter Cavalier, my friend on the teaching course and dedicatee of this book. I knew him for a couple of years after the events in the book, then we lost contact.
2: Hawkeye. Her real first name is Judeth, hence the 'St Jude' poems. I lost contact with her in 1989. These first two characters and I formed the Roehampton 'Circle' described.
3: Sparrow. A woman called Jean whom I knew on the course and met once more in 1991.
4: Puffin. My first wife Simone, whom I met and married in 1975 and divorced in 1979. We remained friendly and in contact till the early 1990s. The 'kidnapping' incident really happened.
5: Seabird. A friend from the late 1970s till mid 1980s. The Rome trip described was in 1982. Bratsby and Bobbin are her two daughters.

Various other 'characters' have cameo roles and I could explain their origins upon request: Pal, Bun(ner), the Friend and so on.

This text is also in the form of an audio-book! I recorded a version in (probably) 1990, perhaps 1991, on cassette tape and digitalised it in 2006. I can make a 7 CD 'box set' if required! (although this version is the second and/or third draft and will be slightly different to the new revision if you want to sing along).